

## **Task Force B Meeting Summary**

### **Monday, November 14, 2005**

Task Force Participants: Janet Cushman – MI Department of Human Services, Diane Golzynski – MI Department of Community Health, Barb Hensinger – MI Department of Agriculture, Sherri King – MI Office of Services to the Aging, Jane Marshall (Chair) – Food Bank Council of Michigan, Barb Mutch – Michigan State University Extension, Terri Stangl – Center for Civil Justice, Jan Williams – MI Department of Human Services.

Additional Participants: Gina Davis – MI Department of Agriculture, Pam Gove – MI Department of Community Health, Viki Lorraine – Michigan State University Extension, Susan Smalley – Michigan State University Extension, Karla Stratton – MI Department of Community Health.

The third Task Force B: Improving Access to Fresh and Healthy Foods meeting convened on Monday, November 14, 2005 from 10:00 am – 12:00 noon in Constitution Hall in Lansing. Council Member Jane Marshall chaired the meeting.

Ms. Marshall called the meeting to order and there was a round of introductions and a review of the agenda.

The meeting began with three brief presentations: Susan Smalley on farmers' markets in Michigan and Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT)/Food Stamp access at farmers' markets, Viki Lorraine on Project FRESH (Michigan's Farmers' Market Nutrition Program), and Sherri King on Senior Project FRESH (Michigan's Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program.) Ms. Smalley, Ms. Lorraine and Ms. King presented to the Task Force a list of recommendations that they had developed regarding EBT access at direct market locations, Project Fresh and Senior Project FRESH.

Task Force participants decided to use the phrase "direct market" to include foods purchased at farmers' markets, roadside stands, farm markets, etc.

After much discussion, Task Force participants identified recommendations that can be grouped into four main policy areas: 1) Increase number of direct market locations in communities with underserved and low-resource populations, 2) Increase the capacity of direct markets to serve target populations via EBT, Project FRESH and Senior Project FRESH programs, 3) Fund access to "direct market" fresh foods, and 4) Outreach and education to increase consumption of "direct market" fresh foods. The many recommendations are grouped below, under a broad policy statement that addresses each of these four issue areas.

1. Increase the number of direct market locations in communities with underserved and low-resource populations.
  - Support research to fill information gaps including: 1) Assessing the current and potential impact of direct market venues on the state, 2) Identifying communities and neighborhoods where local food/direct market entrepreneurial efforts are needed.
  - DCH should investigate and support innovative locations for direct market initiatives (e.g. farmers' markets at Head Start locations).
  - MDA should make state fairgrounds available for direct marketing opportunities.
  - MDA, DCH and OSA should establish relationships and cooperate with the nascent statewide association of farmers' markets to ensure dissemination of information.
2. Increase the capacity of direct markets to serve target populations via EBT, Project FRESH and Senior Project FRESH programs.
  - MDA, DCH and DHS should each establish a point person with the specific charge to increase the usage of food assistance dollars at direct market locations. These point people will work together to develop an inter-agency technical assistance packet (for web posting and distribution to direct marketers) to provide information on establishing EBT access, and Project FRESH and Senior Project FRESH certification.
  - Support research to quantify costs and benefits of farmer/market participation in EBT, Project FRESH and Senior Project FRESH.
  - DMB should evaluate wireless EBT/credit/debit equipment and processing options and negotiate group purchases for interested direct marketers.
  - DCH should make Project FRESH marketing information available online for farmers and market managers.
  - MDA, DCH and OSA should cooperate with the nascent statewide association of farmers' markets to ensure dissemination of information.
3. Strategically distribute state and federal funding to increase consumption of "direct market" fresh foods.
  - State Funds
    - In distributing Michigan's Cool Cities grants and other state-funded grants, establish priority for communities that support direct marketing initiatives, especially in underserved locations.
    - Create a base of state funding of \$2000 (or 100 coupon booklets) per Michigan county to expand the Senior Project Fresh program. This money would be matched with federal dollars.
    - Designate state funds to meet the state's 30% match requirement (or a portion thereof) for the Project Fresh program so that the program can expand statewide.
  - Federal funds
    - Support continued funding for Senior Project FRESH at 2005 levels (in the 2007 Farm Bill.)

- Request USDA (FNS) funding for EBT technology/training/transaction fees at farmers' markets, Project FRESH expansion and Senior Project FRESH expansion.
  - Request funding for transport seniors and other target populations to and from direct market locations.
  - Start a pilot program for EBT use at direct markets.
4. Coordinate outreach and education to target populations to increase awareness of and demand for "direct market" fresh foods.
- Support research to identify and address barriers to food stamp EBT use at direct market locations.
  - DCH and MSUE should develop an annual Michigan "Cook at Home" day/week to increase public awareness of the role of cooking in good health.
  - DCH and OSA should develop materials to educate targeted populations about transport options to and from direct market locations.
  - MDA and OSA should get an outreach booth at Senior Day at the State Fair to educate seniors on assistance available to them (e.g. Senior Project FRESH.)
5. Michigan Food Policy Council (and Task Force B: Access, in particular) should host or sponsor, along with the Food Bank Council of Michigan, a 2006 Michigan Food Security conference, and recommend that this be an annual State-sponsored event with support from MDA, MSUE, MDCH, MDHS, MDE and others.

The Task Force received written materials on food stamp participation rates, but did not have time for discussion.

At the next Task Force B meeting, invited guests will deliver presentations on the school lunch and supper programs, and the Task Force will discuss and approve recommendations to submit to the full Council for consideration at its December 13 meeting. The next meeting of Task Force B is **Monday, January 9 from 10:00 am – 12:00 pm** at Constitution Hall.